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REPORT ON THE PREPARATIONS IN AFRICA FOR THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT IN 1992

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A: BACKGROUND

1. The idea of environment and sustainable development was crystallized in the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, also known as the Brundtland report. Its recommendations emphasized the multi-sectoral approach to environmental management. These recommendations were adopted by General Assembly resolution 42/187 on Environment and Development. By this resolution the General Assembly decided, among other things, that the Regional Commissions, whose mandate is on the social and economic development, should organize regional conference. These conferences were to be with Ministers of Environment, Planning and Education. They were also to include the representatives of Youth and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to propagate the ideas of environment and sustainable development.

2. In the same vein, the General Assembly adopted resolution 43/196 of September 1988. This resolution requested the Secretary General to study the possibility of organizing a United Nations Conference on environment and development in 1992. After considering the Secretary-General's report on the matter, it was decided by resolution 44/228 of September 1989, to hold the Conference in Brazil, to coincide with World Environment day on 5 June 1992. The conference would provide and opportunity to carry out a comprehensive review of the state of the environment since the 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment.

3. The resolution also expressed deep concern about the continuing deterioration of the state of the environment and the serious degradation of the global life-support systems. This degeneration, if allowed to continue, could disrupt the global ecological balance. This would endanger the life-sustaining qualities of the Earth and lead to an ecological catastrophe. It was clearly recognized that decisive, urgent and global action was necessary to protect the ecological balance of the Earth. It further acknowledged the global character of environmental problems. Important among these were climate change and depletion of the ozone layer. All these required actions at the global, regional and national levels and involving the commitment and participation of all countries.

4. The responsibility for containing, reducing and eliminating global environmental damage, the General Assembly emphasized, must be borne by the countries causing it, in relation to the damage caused. This also called for international co-operation in the area of research, development and application of environmentally sound

policies and technologies. To do this, there was the need for new and additional financial resources to be channelled to the developing countries. This would ensure their full participation in the global efforts for environmental conservation.

5. Consistent with their mandates on social and economic development, the Regional Commissions were again asked to play an important role in the preparatory process. UNCED-1992 was not on isolated issues but on how packages of multi-sectoral environment programmes could be formulated and implemented to enhance and sustain the development process in each region.

6. In the light of the above considerations the following environmental issues, not listed in order of priority, were chosen for discussion at UNCED-1992:

(a) Protection of the quality and supply of fresh water resources;

(b) Protection of the ocean and all kinds of seas, including enclosed and semi-enclosed seas and coastal areas, the protection and rational use and development of their living resources;

(c) Conservation of biological diversity;

(d) Environmentally sound management of biotechnology;

(e) Environmentally sound management of wastes, particularly hazardous wastes, toxic chemicals and the prevention of illegal traffic in toxic and dangerous products and wastes;

(f) Protection of human health conditions and improvement of the quality of life;

(g) Protection of the atmosphere by combating climate change, depletion of the ozone layer and transboundary air pollution;

(h) Protection and management of land resources by, inter alia, combating deforestation, desertification and drought;

(i) Improvement of the living and working environment of the poor in urban slums and rural areas, through eradicating poverty, inter alia, by implementing integrated rural and urban development programmes, taking other appropriate measures at all levels necessary to stem the degradation of the environment.

7. Several objectives were identified for addressing these issues. Among them were:

(a) To identify strategies to be coordinated action regionally and globally to deal with them within a particular time frame.

(b) To recommend measures to be taken at the national and international levels to protect and enhance the environment. The measures should take into account the specific needs of developing countries, through the development and implementation of policies for sustainable and environmentally sound development. Specific emphasis should be placed on incorporating environmental concerns in the social and economic development process, and of various sectoral policies. Sources of environmental degradation should be identified and appropriate remedial measures taken against them.

(c) To identify ways and means of providing new and additional financial resources, particularly in developing countries, for environmentally sound development programmes. This should be in accordance with national development objectives, priorities and plans. Ways of establishing the effective monitoring of such programmes explicitly defined. This will facilitate the assessment of the progress in their implementation, based on accurate and reliable data.

(d) To promote the development of human resources, particularly in developing countries, for the protection and enhancement of the environment.

(e) To promote the development or strengthening of appropriate institutions at the national, regional and global levels for addressing environmental problems.

B: THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM AND THE UNCED-1992 PREPARATORY PROCESS FOR AFRICA

8. Consistent with their sectoral mandates and their contribution to social and economic development, peace and security, the United Nations system has been challenged by UNCED-1992. The challenge lies in demonstrating their contribution to environment and sustainable development and playing a very active role in the preparatory process. They should show that UNCED-1992 is not going to be just another conference on environmental matters per se. UNCED-1992 should be a forum for the exchange of ideas on integrated programmes implementation strategies in the different sectors of their mandates for achieving sustainable development.

9. Within this context, the Kampala Agenda of Action towards sustainable development in Africa should dictate the tone of what

agencies of the UN system must do in order to achieve environment and sustainable development. They must act as a team, each working out how best its capabilities can contribute to the package of national development programmes with strong environment components. This is a difficult challenge facing the UN, Africa and its institutions. Environment and sustainable development in the 1990s and beyond will call for considerable resource requirements and strong institutional and technological support. In all this, little must be expected from outside Africa. Africa must be made to respond to environmental management responsibilities both within the national, regional, and the global context. In all this, ECA must continue to fulfill its mandate on social and economic development. It must illustrate its lead role in assisting Africa in demonstrating African independence and African inter-dependence in developing the region.

10. Under these circumstances the UN system needs to have a re-thinking of the matter. This is important not only because it should be seen to be at the centre of action, but also because, like it or not, member States will continue to pressurize the system for technical assistance.

11. With this anticipation in mind, it is the desire for the UN system to come up with the design and implementation strategy of an integrated institutional policy and development programme framework in relation to the development of Africa's production systems. This includes the fostering of technical co-operation programmes. The programmes should be aimed at providing efficient support to African countries in their effort to manage and exploit the ecological, economic and cultural patrimony of its various sub-regions.

12. In order to bring about the full integration of social and natural science approaches when considering environmental problems, the UN's state of the art vis-a-vis local problems must be demonstrated. The UN system must be able to imbue economic planners with ecological and environmental interests. The system, in unison must concretely demonstrate it's ability to assist member States in developing integrated development programmes.

13. These are the ECA's guidelines for the UN system's participation in preparing Africa for UNCED-1992.

C: AFRICA'S PERSPECTIVES FOR UNCED-1992

14. Although all the nine issues for UNCED-1992 are of concern to Africa, not all command the same priority interest. While addressing all these issues, therefore, emphasis must be given to those ones that are of pressing concern to the region. There are global problems to which Africa shares in the blame such as climate change and ozone depletion. However, the modalities for solution

cannot be unilaterally prescribed across the board. It is in this spirit that the regional preparatory process is capital to the success of UNCED-1992. This should be the thrust of preparations in Africa.

15. It would be useful to note that in implementing the recommendations of the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development and preparations for UNCED-1992, the countries of the Economic Commission for Europe have chosen four areas of discussion which they consider are of priority to them. They are:

(a) Awareness raising and public participation;
(b) The economics of sustainable development;
(c) Sustainable energy use; and
(d) sustainable industrial activity.

16. Co-operation between the countries of the ECE and the developing world was also one of the focusses of the discussion. Participating in this dialogue has been representatives of governments, business, voluntary environmental groups, youth, science and labour. The outcome of the conference will be Europe's input into the preparatory process for the UNCED-1992.

17. Africa must, under these circumstances, purposefully discuss African approaches to her pressing environmental problems. Thereafter, actively participate in concrete terms in the dialogue regarding the global approach, her own priorities must be clear and practicable. Within the framework of self-reliant development interests, the priorities and strategies that are chosen must be developed to facilitate global environmental management and the international flow of resources for that purpose.

18. Most importantly, institutions must be developed and/or for the training of manpower capabilities and administrative structures that will practically re-enforce environmental monitoring, assessment and evaluation. This must be a matter of policy.

19. This 1992 Conference must be considered within the context of the situation that will obtain in the rest of the world thereafter. Africa must, therefore, come out with a position for the Conference which will reflect her understanding of the issues as they affect her and the determination to effectively address them.

D: AFRICA'S AGENDA FOR ACTION TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND THE UN SYSTEM'S RESPONSE:

20. To sharpen the focus of the preparatory process for Africa, the issues addressed in the Kampala Agenda for Action should be harmonized with those of the Conference. This having been done,

problems must then be identified and solutions proposed in the form of programme activities which the UN system will play a major role in supporting. They could then be regrouped with the UNCED-1992 issues as suggested below. Problems are posed for each issue and the important questions to answer are (a) what integrated national, sub-regional and regional programmes can be strengthened/developed by member States/development agencies now in order to mitigate the problem? and (b) how best can all the UN agencies work together in assisting member States to address this multi-faceted and inter-agency problem?

(i) (a) Kampala Agenda issue: Preventing and reversing desertification;

(b) UNCED-1992 issue: Protection and management of land resources by, inter alia, combating deforestation, desertification and drought;

Problem :

21. Why have the on-going desertification control programmes in Africa not been as successful as had been anticipated?. What further sub-regional, regional and international support is required to make them work? What existing national, sub-regional and regional measures can be strengthened? How can they benefit from international action aimed at reversing desertification? Based on the findings, what specific proposals can be made as inputs into work of PrepCom? How can assistance be mobilized from the international community towards this? How can the measures proposed contribute to addressing the global issues such as serious food shortfalls, famine, climate change and the living environment of rural and urban poor?

(ii) (a) Kampala Agenda issue: Achieving food self-sufficiency and food security;

(b) UNCED-1992 issue: (i) Protection and management of land resources by, inter alia, combating deforestation, desertification and drought; (ii) conservation of biological diversity; (iii) environmentally sound management of biotechnology; (iv) Protection of the oceans and all kinds of seas, including enclosed and semi-enclosed seas, and of coastal areas and the protection, rational use and development of their living resources;

Problem :

22. Despite the food production potential of the region, it has not succeeded in achieving food self-sufficiency as indicated in (a) above. Why have the food programmes, past and on-going not been able to solve the problem? Where should the focus be placed in

environmental management to achieve this? What regional and interregional co-operative actions can be taken to help in this direction (e.g. de-culturalization of dietary habits, science and technological base for agricultural production and the protection and management of land and sea as well as other water resources)? Is land tenure an impediment?

(iii)(a) Kampala Agenda issue: Ensuring efficient and equitable use of water resources;

(b) UNCED-1992 issue: Protection of the quality and supply of fresh water resources;

Problem :

23. How can on-going water resources development programmes be coordinated and, if possible, streamlined to better respond to drought and desertification control programmes, agricultural and agro-pastoral activities, small-scale energy production and the development of related rural low-cost technology. Sub-regional and regional activities are aimed mostly at river and lake basin development, how best can international support to enhance these programmes as contribution to addressing global environmental concern?

(iv) (a) Kampala Agenda issue: Securing greater energy self-sufficiency;

(b) UNCED-1992 issues: (i) Protection of the atmosphere by combating climate change, depletion of ozone layer and transboundary air pollution; (ii) Protection and management of land resources by, inter alia, combating deforestation, desertification and drought;

Problem :

24. The search for alternative sources of energy to fuelwood has been one of the crucial factors in desertification control and deforestation programmes in Africa. Past and on-going programmes do not seem to have had much impact on improving the situation. Where have the constrains been? Have there been acceptable alternatives? What action is proposed at the national, sub-regional and regional levels that would strengthen local capabilities and attract international co-operation in alleviating the situation? How much information is available on the deforestation process underway in Africa and its impact on global warming?

(v) (a) Kampala Agenda issue: Optimizing industrial production.

(b) UNCED-1992 issue: (i) Environmentally sound management of wastes, particularly hazardous wastes, and of toxic chemicals, as well as of illegal international traffic in toxic and dangerous products and wastes;

Problem :

25. Industrialization is the key to development. Yet the environmental problems related to it are enormous and destructive. Africa is planning its Second Industrial Development Decade. UNCED issues do not directly address those of industrial technology and clean production. What are the major emerging environmental problems of industrial activity? What is the role the level of technology for handling industrial wastes of all types, generated within Africa? What strategies should be adopted for Africa to participate in the international management of industrial environmental problems including the working environment and pollution control?

(vi) (a) Kampala Agenda issue: Managing demographic change and pressures.

(b) UNCED-1992 issue: (i) Improvement of the living environment of the poor in urban and rural areas, through eradication poverty, inter alia, by implementing integrated rural and urban development programmes, as well as taking other appropriate measures at all levels necessary to stem the degradation of the environment. (ii) Protection of human health conditions and the improvement of the quality of life.

Problem :

26. The present population of the continent will likely double over the next two decades to a total of around 1 billion people. The urban population will likely quadruple. Its distribution is extremely imbalanced such that while some countries are definitely overpopulated, some are desperately underpopulated. Such trends will continue to create an imbalance in the crucial relationship between people, resources, environment and development.

27. What are the crucial population problems in Africa as they relate to the environment? Can these problems be generalized? How can population growth, its distribution and demographic change be managed in order to achieve a more equitable, productive and sustainable balance between people, resources, environment and development. What programmes need to be strengthened or developed to achieve these goals?

(vii)(a) Kampala Agenda issues: Maintaining species and ecosystems.

(b) UNCED-1992 issues(s): (i) Protection and management of land resources by, inter alia, combating deforestation, desertification and drought; (ii) conservation of biological diversity; (iii) environmentally sound management of biotechnology; (iv) Protection of the oceans and all kinds of seas, including enclosed and semi-enclosed seas, and of coastal areas and the protection, rational use and development of their living resources,

Problem :

28. Tropical forests in Africa are being lost at the rate of over 3.7 million hectares annually. Most of it for export timber, harvested for local wood products and tourist artifacts, cleared for farm land, burnt down by bush fires or cut for fuel wood. What national, sub-regional and regional programmes can be implemented to protect and manage on a sustainable basis endangered animal and plant species and ecosystems in order to maintain biological diversity.

E: STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTING THE UNCED-1992 PREPARATORY PROCESS:

(a) The UN system:

29. The UN agencies will channel their inputs into the regional preparatory process to the ECA. The UNDP country representatives shall act as the local UN focal point and forward country report to ECA.

(b) The participants in the preparatory process and in the implementation of ensuing programmes/projects:

30. The African Charter for Popular Participation in Development affirms that "popular participation is, in essence, the empowerment of the people to effectively involve themselves in creating the structures and designing policies and programmes that serve the interests of all as well as to effectively contribute to the development process and share equitably in its benefits. Therefore, there must be an opening up of political process to accommodate freedom of opinions, tolerate differences, accept consensus on issues as well as ensure the effective participation of the people and their organizations and associations."

31. In this spirit, all the groups that should be involved in the environmental management decision making process. These groups include the youth, women, non-governmental organizations and business, both private and para-statal, must actively contribute to

the preparatory process. All country reports should include their inputs. This will ensure that programme strategies are formulated with their participation in order all available national resources are utilized.

(c) The preparation scenario:

32. The five United Nations Regional Economic Commissions have organized or are about to organize regional preparatory conferences. The reports of these conferences will be inputs into the activities of the Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) for the Conference. These regional meetings should be held preferably before August 1991 so that the results can be discussed during the third meeting of the PrepCom that month.

33. ECA will organize, with the collaboration of all UN agencies, the regional conference for Africa, tentatively in Egypt from 8 - 12 April 1991. Before then, the following activities have been planned:

(i) Preparation and finalization of conference document - February, 1991.

UN agencies are requested to indicate concrete programmes in the areas identified in the Kampala Agenda for Action, with resource allocation within Africa during the 1990s. This information will be used to suggest package programmes at the national, sub-regional and regional levels. It will also be used as a basis for suggesting how best the UN system can co-operate to implement those programmes for environmentally sound and sustainable development in the region.

(ii) Forum of eminent persons specially Africans, to review the document - February, 1991;

All UN agencies will be invited to participate in this Forum.

(iii) Sub-regional activities along with MULPOC and other relevant inter-governmental and non-governmental meetings during 1991-1992;

All UN agencies will be requested to actively participate in these meetings.

(iv) Regional conference - 8 to 12 April 1991;

All UN agencies will participate in the Conference.

(v) Presentation of conference report to ECA conference of Ministers - April 1991;

UN agencies usually participate, as observers, in the ECA Conference of Ministers.

(vi) Presentation of report to AMCEN, May 1991;

UN agencies usually participate in AMCEN sessions.

(vii) Presentation of report to OAU summit - June 1991.

UN agencies participate, as observers in the OAU summit.

F: DOCUMENTATION FOR THE PREPARATORY CONFERENCE:

34. There will be one main document for the preparatory conference. All UN agencies will contribute to the document as indicated in paragraph 33(i) above, particularly through country reports and their regional programme activities. This document will deal with:

(a) The relationship between the functioning of African economy and environmental problems; the economics of sustainability and environmentally sound development Planning;

(b) Review of the relevance and importance of each of the nine UNCED-1992 issues to environment and development in Africa; and

(c) Programmes and projects for implementing the Kampala Agenda for action towards sustainable development in Africa in the spirit of UNCED-1992, the mobilization of resources including public participation for environmental management and sustainable development:

G: PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES:

35. To promote the understanding of the major environmental issues in Africa of the African preparatory process for UNCED-92, a number of promotional activities are foreseen. ECA, in collaboration with agencies of the UN system, is developing the following:

(i) Fact Sheet series to be distributed to the independent sector and Government offices of Member States. The first issue of the Fact Sheets will be distributed before the sub-regional meetings. The second issue before

the Regional Preparatory Meeting (March 91), and the third issue in May 91. From then on there will be subsequent issues every two months until UNCED in June 92.

(ii) Leaflet, to be produced by ECA after the African Preparatory Meeting, with the "African position" on environmental matters. The leaflet would have wide distribution within and outside Africa, primarily, but not exclusively, to the government and independent sectors.

(iii) Radio interview/documentary series, to be produced by ECA in co-operation with the UN Department of Public Information in New York and OAU. As much as possible following the frequency and themes covered by the Fact Sheet series, the radio programmes would include interviews with government, independent sector and intergovernmental agencies officials.

(iv) Film/video : Resources permitting, a 15 minute long documentary on the African environment will be produced for presentation at UNCED.

30. With this preparation package it is hoped that Africa will make a strong representation at UNCED-1992.

G: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This United Nations Conference on Environment and Development will be a medley of ideas and programmes on environment and sustainable development, principally as a global issues. However the regional aspects will be carefully examined in order to enhance strategies for the much needed regional cooperation on the matter. It is on this score that Africa must prepare well for it, not just as a band wagon situation but in concrete and well thought out practical approaches to environmental issues, particularly those that severely affect the region.

On this note participants are requested to fully participate in the preparatory process by,

(a) assisting in the writing of country reports and forwarding them to ECA immediately;

(b) disseminating the ideas contained in this document, within the context of their environments;

(c) participating actively at all related meetings;

(d) encouraging the active participation of NGOs, youth and women's organizations in the preparatory process and in the main conferences both in Cairo and in Brazil.